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"The Texas Workforce Commission proved to the U.S. Department of Labor that this was not the case."

**Give yourself lead time**

How long does H2B certification take? According to Bartlett, the average certification time frame is now 60 to 90 days.

For some contractors, the jury is still out. Several irrigation and landscape contractors admitted they were beginning to use the program, but were unwilling to make a statement at this time. Two major green industry trade associations said they could not officially endorse the program and preferred not to make an official comment.

Ed LaFlamme, branch manager of Tru-Green LandCare in New Haven, CT, brought in 10 H2B workers in 1999. He

had mixed results, noting that several workers asked to return to Mexico. "Before a contractor brings these workers all the way from Mexico, he should carefully screen them beforehand. You need to look for flexible people who are experienced and want to work in the landscape industry," he adds.



Ed LaFlamme

**Increase your success rate**

"One of the most difficult factors with H2B is figuring out how you will assimilate foreign workers into your community and your company," says Scott Evans, owner of C. Scott, Inc., a labor placement firm located in Bay City, TX.

Evans says the first step is to become a bilingual company. "Teach your staff Spanish and hold English classes for the Spanish-speaking workers."

The second step is to recruit from friends and family of existing employees. "When the employee knows a person in your company, they can blend into the company and community much faster," he says.

"It's also important to prepare a welcome package for each H2B worker. Give them a company greeting letter and a company pad to write their families on their first day. Offer to mail the letters for them."

Don't forget the welcome meal. "After a long trip from Mexico, a meal is always appreciated," says Evans.

*Robert E. Reaves is a turfgrass specialist with Van Waters & Rogers Inc. in Austin, TX.*

**Landscape**  
MANAGEMENT

# Skills Development

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# Develop your own Career track

**These companies took care of their employees, only to watch them grow into competent managers and supervisors. Can you do the same with your people?**

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN

**I**t's hard enough just finding good people to hire but what about developing those who have more responsibility? How do you determine the laborer who has what it takes to be a foreman or the foreman who could grow into a middle manager?

How do you even hold onto people long enough to develop them? The good ones often leave to start their own businesses.

We visited with three companies who have answers to these questions:

## **Environmental Industries Inc.**

Environmental Industries Inc., of Calabasas, CA, is the largest privately owned landscape contracting company in the

United States. One of the areas in which they are known to excel is developing people from within into supervisors and then into managers. *LM* asked Bill Arman, EII's vice president for human resources, to explain that success:

*LM: Developing people from within into supervisors and middle managers is something the industry traditionally does not do well. How do you do it?*

**Arman:** The first step is to start with the end in mind. We try to visualize what types of businesses we are going to be in, what customers we are going to be relating with and what skill sets and technologies we will need.

Then we make our future thinking clear to the organization. We teach our people what the skill sets are that we will need for the future. We also have a process in place to analyze what they've learned so that the learning is stronger than just taking a one-day class and a two-day seminar.

*LM: What kinds of things do you teach people as you develop them from within in this process?*

**Arman:** We look at three main areas. The first area is the customer: how to look at the work from the customers' perspectives.

Second, how to deliver customers' concerns effectively and efficiently.

We look at production: How do we obtain it? We want to be well organized and to execute fundamentals (what we call

Best Practices.)

Third, there is the culture. We try to create the culture in our organization that has people transferring this knowledge to others as they work. We create that culture by financial means, by recognition of people, by offering varied experiences and cool assignments.

*LM: Do you have success developing people from within?*

**Arman:** That's primarily what we do — develop from within. You measure success by retaining qualified people who are doing their jobs. You can't look at your overall retention because keeping people who are not doing their job is not a good thing either. You have to reward the good performers, give the others a chance to improve, and take those who don't improve and give them a chance to succeed elsewhere.

*LM: And do you also learn from other industries?*

**Arman:** Yes. We have "tours" where we visit other operations that are not related to our business; for example, UPS, Federal Express, Home Depot and large organizations that are successful with lots of people development. And we observe, watch, ask lots of questions, meet with their human resources people and learn everything we can.



**Bill Arman**

*continued on page 56*



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### TruGreen-LandCare

Rex Gore is the south Texas regional manager for TruGreen-LandCare. Until last year, he was president of Clean Cut Inc.,

an Austin-based landscaping company that is now part of TGLC. Clean Cut grew at an average rate of 30% a year over a 13-year period, meaning their hiring and retention needs were staggering.

**LM:** So you had to retain the good people

you had, hire new people and develop and promote people from within — in a way that sustained 30% growth year after year.

**Gore:** That growth rate means we retained most of the good people we had, and hired a bunch more.

**LM:** And you clearly succeeded.

**Gore:** I believe so. When we sold to TruGreen, we had become a \$22-million/year business with 400 people. By the way, the business is still growing under TruGreen, and we're doing things much the same way, with some modifications to suit our corporate style.

**LM:** Do you hire supervisors and managers from outside or develop from within?

**Gore:** As far as managers, we have some people who came up through the ranks from crew positions. But more typically, mid- to upper-management comes from recruiting at colleges, especially more recently. In almost all cases, supervisors and foremen were hired as laborers within our companies. By displaying capabilities, and with some reasonably decent training, these are people who have developed into competent supervisory personnel.

**LM:** You must have had success retaining them long enough to develop them into supervisors?

**Gore:** Yes. As I'm looking through the list of foremen (reads names aloud), about half of these are people who started as laborers six to eight or 10 to 12 years ago.

**LM:** Why do you think they stayed with you long enough to develop into foremen?

**Gore:** It's not brain surgery. It's trying to hire pretty good people, then screening them rigorously. That means when you find people who don't show good attitudes or capabilities, you need to make that cut reasonably quickly at the laborer level. From there, there's always some people in any group that have leadership capabilities,

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## 5 ways to develop people

Landscape Management talked to Dave St. John, GreenSearch, an Atlanta-based consulting firm that does both management personnel searches and HR consulting. He shared some of his observations about developing productive supervisors and managers.

What do the successful companies do differently from the rest of the green industry? Several things, St. John says:

► **Owner visibility and concern.** "The successful ones, where we've seen long-

tenured people, are owners who personally stay involved. They're instrumental in hiring the people, they watch their progress and they look for the things in their behavior that indicate they can shoulder a heavier load."

► **People instinct.** "The successful owners we've seen also have an instinct about people. They know when someone is ready to move on to accept greater challenges. They can differentiate between technical challenges and the broader, more conceptual things which give a sense of supervisory ability."

► **Leadership observers.** "They watch for informal leaders who other people naturally start to follow."



Dave St. John

► **Clear communication.** "Good owners have the ability to state what they want from people and not how the people are to do it. That gives the emerging supervisor a platform from which to be creative and show what he or she can do.

"There isn't a particular route for supervisory development, especially for companies that don't have well developed recruiting processes. The basic element is very good people judgment on the part of the owners and senior decision makers."

► **New responsibilities.** "As for growing people into middle management, it's like the NBA draft. The further up you go on the totem pole, the fewer people from which to choose. To bridge someone from supervisor to manager, start giving the candidates more diverse things to do — things that are new and different. You might have them run two different segments of the business, lead three different kinds of crews or deal with new customers."

"Diversity of task really tests their scope. The difference is that a manager now has to manage results, not activities. Management's a different game. A supervisor is a team player; a manager is the team coach. There's a big difference!"

— George Witterschein





**\* \$156.20**

*That's What!*

**\* Fuel Savings Cost Comparison RedMax®  
Strato-Charged™ versus standard 2-cycle trimmers**

	<b>RedMax® Strato-Charged™ Trimmer</b>	<b>Standard 2-cycle Trimmer</b>
Fluid ounce of fuel used per hour	<b>16.5</b>	<b>25.2</b>
Hours used per day	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
Days used per week	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
Weeks used per year	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>
Total hours used per year	<b>1,040</b>	<b>1,040</b>
Fluid ounce of fuel used per year	<b>17,160</b>	<b>26,208</b>
Gallons used per year (128 fl oz. = 1 gallon)	<b>134</b>	<b>205</b>
Gas cost per gallon	<b>\$1.35</b>	<b>\$1.35</b>
Oil cost per gallon of mix	<b>\$.85</b>	<b>\$.85</b>
Total gas & oil cost per gallon of mix	<b>\$2.20</b>	<b>\$2.20</b>

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**Total fuel cost per year** **\$294.80** **\$451.00**

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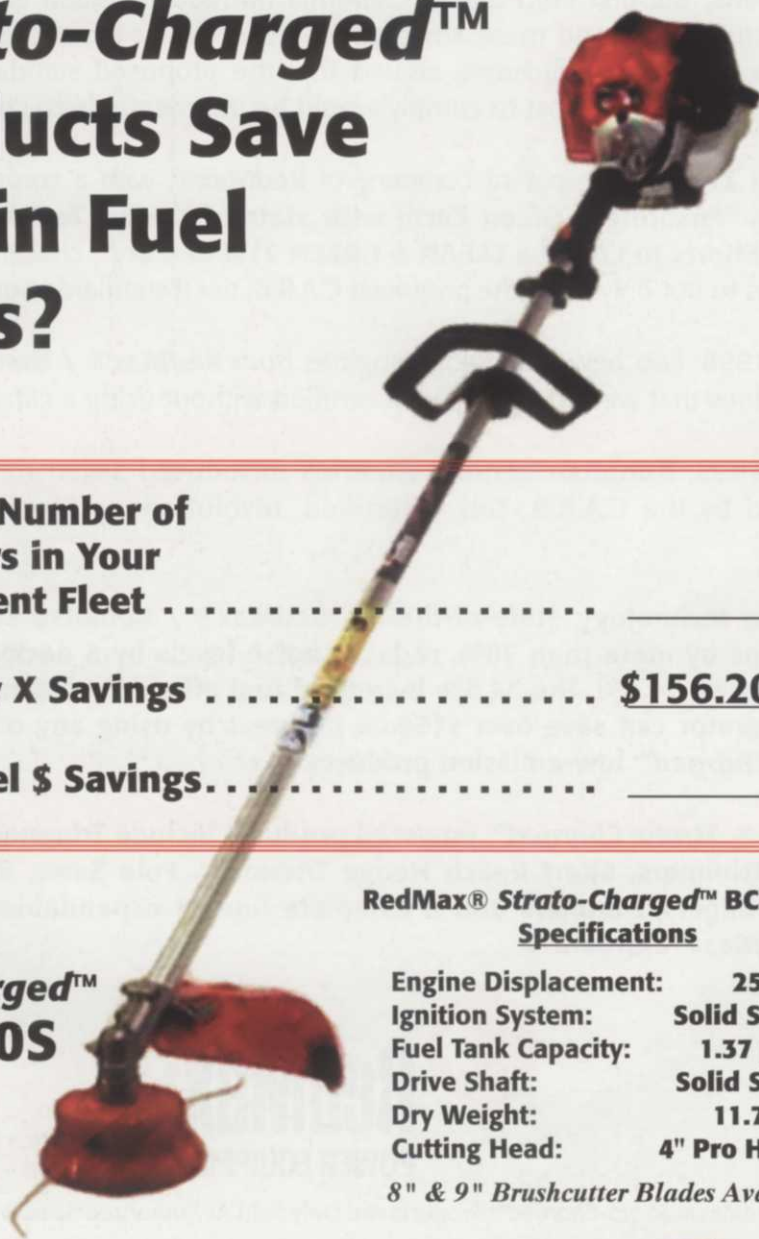
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- ▶ On July 5, 1995, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), approved California's Air Resources Board's (ARB) authorization request, which made the **small off-road engine (including handheld equipment such as string trimmers & chain saws) regulations**, the first enforceable California off-road emission control regulations. Many manufacturers believed these strict standards would in effect outlaw two-cycle powered products. These manufacturers argued that the proposed standards were economically unattainable, and the cost to comply would be unacceptable to consumers.
- ▶ **Komatsu Zenoah**, the parent company of **RedMax®**, with a corporate mission statement that says "**Ensuring a Green Earth with state-of-the-art Technology, we are Steadily Making Efforts to Create a CLEAN & GREEN 21st Century**", challenged their engine design engineers to not only meet the proposed C.A.R.B. tier II standards but to exceed them.
- ▶ In May 1998, two new-technology engines from **RedMax® / Komatsu Zenoah** were the first engines that were C.A.R.B. Tier II certified without using a catalytic muffler.
- ▶ In July 1999, **Komatsu Zenoah America** introduced seven new **RedMax®** products powered by the C.A.R.B. Tier II certified, revolutionary, **Strato-Charged™** two-cycle engines.
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